3: Read E-5 (1935-1939)1960
FR5 Ngoni FR5

old Ngoni families, and shining like marble, as did the hut and veranda floors. On this polished space, or else on the veranda, the child's grandmother sat when callers had been announced, and from that vantage-point she could command the entrance through the surrounding fence, and agree to receive callers who had asked for admittance. Also in front of the hut was another drying platform which was large enough to offer shelter from the sun in hot weather; the dovecot where the 'royal pigeons' lived if the household was of the royal clan or distinguished enough to aspire to keeping pigeons. Off to one side was a hut for the goats at night and another, hoisted up on a platform, for the poultry. On the other side of the main hut were the grain stores, built up on low platforms. The maize stores were up to ten feet high and ten feet in diameter in these big households, and well-to-do women would have four or five of them bulging with maize cobs. There were smaller circular mudded bins for ground-nuts and millet. Behind the hut were two or three small huts where some of the helpers slept, and one of them was generally a kitchen hut. Piles of wood, and bundles of thatching grass bound neatly with bark rope, were stacked against the fence.

There were innumerable objects around the compound of interest to the small child prowling about. Two or three tall wooden pounding mortars, so heavy that they could not be lifted and had to be trundled on their circular base from one place to another, stood near the kitchen hut, or were moved to the front if the women pounding had to watch children there. There were much smaller mortars for pounding ground-nuts, kept when not in use in the fenced-in veranda; and one or more large flat stones for grinding finger millet and bulrush millet. Baskets were of all sizes and shapes from the small round food basket with a lid in which father's food was carried to the kraal gate, to the wide shallow winnowing baskets, the deep round carrying baskets some as large as two feet in diameter, and the porous baskets used as

/6 cont'd/

Byres for the cattle are placed on the edge of the village, with a separate division for calves at the side of the main byre. The robustness with which the byre is built depends on the extent to which there are marauding animals, particularly hyenas, leopards and lions in the vicinity. The usual method of construction is using poles some ten to twenty feet long, placed close together in a circle of about twenty to twenty-five feet in diameter. Thorn branches are placed on the outside of the fence, and the gate is a simple affair of several upright poles leaning in a slot made by two cross-poles. If an anthill is available, the byre will be made round it, so that the cattle may to some extent be able to clamber up out of the mud, which in the wet season may come up to their bellies. The building of a byre is undertaken by the men who will keep their cattle in it, and when a village moves to a new site, this is the first job to be tackled. Each owner of seven or eight head of cattle may have his own byre, but a man with many cattle may share a byre with his brothers. Owners of one or two head keep their cattle with their relatives.

/7/ Small domestic animals, such as pigs, goats, sheep and chickens, are kept in the village, near the hut of their owner, and their pens are provided with roofs and sometimes a fence as well, for protection against hyenas. Deserted dwelling huts, whose owners have gone away or have died, are used as shelters for calves and other animals.

Drying platforms are built to provide a stand for reed mats on which flour can be dried in the sun. If no platform has been built, the mats are placed on the ground where the flour is at the mercy of straying animals. Pigeon houses are built on platforms about six feet off the ground, with small holes to allow entry for the pigeons. Chicken houses are also sometimes built in this way, with a ladder to enable the chicken to ascend. The more prosperous villagers may have other buildings, such as latrines, washing shelters, or occasionally open-sided shelters for sitting in and gossiping.

/12 cont'd/

252 The maize is shelled as required, the grains are pounded in a mortar, and then soaked in water for three or four days, if there is time. They are then pounded again, and the flour winnowed out. [831] The residue is ground between two stones. The husks obtained after [273] the first pounding are used as animal fodder, and in beer making. The diligent housewife pounds twice a week, each pounding lasting for about three hours. It is usual for a group of women living as [461] neighbours to pound at the same time, singing together.

The maize flour is dried in the sun, and then put into a pot or [251] basket until required for porridge or beer. Porridge forms the basis 262 of most meals, although in February and March there may not be enough maize left in the storehouses to make this possible. Adults [264] eat porridge in solid form, kneading handfuls of it between their fingers before eating, but infants are fed on fluid porridge made from [853] the ground flour. The herdboys in charge of the cattle may use the milk to make their porridge with. Cooking is women's work, but [462] men by themselves on a journey or working on the tobacco farms will cook porridge for themselves. Green mealies, usually fried, are eaten when available.

263 Relish is required to go with the porridge, the commonest relishes being pumpkin leaves and hibiscus leaves. There are in addition 222 many wild fruits and leaves searched for in the bush at their appro- 24 priate seasons, while the gardens provide pumpkins, cucumbers, 262 various kinds of beans and peas, and edible gourds. The most sought-after relish, and one of the most infrequently found, is meat. Chick- 262 ens are given to honoured visitors, while beef, mutton, pork, and goat meat are eaten when they can be found. Livestock other than chickens are killed for eating only on ceremonial occasions, such as [231] funerals or marriages, but owners not infrequently kill animals and sell the meat to raise money to pay damages, to finance a journey, or to obtain labour in the garden. Animals that die are usually eaten. Some people keep ducks, pigeons and tame guinea fowl, while such ●235 game as is killed on the /13/ hunt is divided among the hunters and 224 taken home to be eaten. Owners of guns sometimes hunt by themselves and sell the meat.

/13 cont'd/

273 Beer drinking is one of the most important social occupations, and a considerable proportion of maize is consumed in this way. Brewing takes six days to complete, but two weeks more are required to prepare the sprouted maize that is an essential ingredient. Once brewed, the beer remains drinkable for two or three days, but the partially brewed beer, of smaller alcoholic content, is also drunk. Beer is brewed for many reasons, for working parties in the garden or housebuilding, for selling at threepence a bowl, or as often as not, just for drinking. Finger millet is used in beer making, and if available, the whole maize flour from a grinding machine, as well as the white maize flour of the village. The beer is brewed in large ten-gallon pots, then poured into smaller four-gallon pots that can be carried about, and from these ladled with a gourd into bowls or ornamental gourd cups. Four-gallon petrol tins are sometimes used instead of pots, and large enamelware mugs instead of bowls. Very rarely, beer is drunk from glasses.

VIII

233 Cattle are in the care of herdboys, whose ages range from eight to fourteen. They take the cattle out of the byres in the morning and go off with them to look for pasture. The cattle come back in the early afternoon, when the calves suck, and go off again until about five o'clock in the evening, when they are put back in the byre for the night. The calves are looked after by smaller children, and do not usually go so far away from the village as do the fully grown cattle. In the dry season, after the harvest, when there is no danger of spoiling crops, the cattle wander about very much by themselves, and the boys play or do odd jobs in the village. In these days of village schools, suitable boys are not always free to look after cattle, and in this case girls will do the herding.

234 Little use is made of the milk except occasionally for use in porridge, and for sale to Europeans. The European market also pro-
235 vides the only use for eggs.